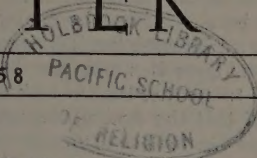


THE CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS LETTER

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SOMETHING OF LASTING VALUE

It is quite true as Dr. Gaius Glenn Atkins wrote some years ago that the vital history of a community is often more effectively recorded in the history of its churches than in its more formal official annals.

There are no documents more eagerly sought by local town libraries, state historical societies and national historical organizations than the histories of local churches. And to the student of American beginnings the histories of individual local churches, written perhaps a hundred or more years ago, are of intense interest for here are recorded significant events of a community's inner life. Such records are of lasting value.

The Congregational Christian Historical Society from its beginning has been seeking to collect church histories, new and old, and place them for safekeeping in fireproof depositories for the use of students and church officials of years to come. We have been able to collect over one hundred and fifty such valuable books and sent them to permanent placement for safekeeping. We are certain that there are many more yet to be collected.

THE LOCAL CHURCH HISTORIAN

As the interest in our history grows, more and more histories are being written. This we know by reason of our growing correspondence with local church historians. The appointment of such an official is becoming an established custom. Over a thousand church historians have been enrolled by the Society.

The church historian should be elected and given specific duties by a responsible church body. His duties may include the keeping of a record of significant church events, compiling a file of church publications and a scrapbook of interesting items relating to the church's work, collecting historical documents for safekeeping, providing the church library and the town library with denominational histories and important publications, especially *Advance*. The historian should be a student of our national church history, develop a reference library and be prepared to assist students and others with information when desired, and such other duties as may be related to church celebrations, study courses and community events.

Additional information relating to the work of the local church historian may be secured from the office of the Society.

CORRECTING ORGANIZATION DATES

Each year we publish in *Advance* the list of churches reaching an anniversary - 25th, 50th, 75th, 100th, etc. Before doing this we make careful study of the date of organization of each church as given in the Year Book, then we send out our list to State Conference offices for check of the list by Conference records. But no sooner is the list published than we begin getting letters calling attention to the error in a date, sometimes by as much as 60 years! Again we have letters asking where we secured the date we used, as the local church has no record of its founding date!

Gradually we are getting the figures corrected. But as we move along on this 25-year period it will take twenty-five years to canvass the entire list of churches in this careful fashion. The Year Book is the official text and the dates there published have been furnished by the church. This may seem a small matter but it is a symptom of lack of order. Here is a task for the local church historian to see that the church's records are in order and that the Annual Report from the church to the Conference carries the correct date of its organization.

F. L. F.

The Treasurer's Report

1957 was a good year financially for our Society. Our expenses were kept at a modest level and our receipts showed a modest increase. Receipts were \$8,487.19 and expenses \$7,236.07 leaving a balance for the year of \$1,251.12. We hope in time to build up a small reserve for emergencies and to carry the Society over the slack periods of the year.

JAMES H. LIGHTBOURNE, Treasurer

A Prayer Worth Repeating Today

"Almighty God, we make our earnest plea that thou wilt keep the United States in thy most holy protection; that thou wilt incline the hearts of the citizens to cultivate a spirit of subordination and obedience to government and entertain a brotherly affection and love to one another and to their fellow citizens in the United States at large; and finally that thou wilt most graciously be pleased to dispose us all to do justice, to love mercy and to demean ourselves with that charity, humility and pacific temper of mind which were the characteristics of the Divine Author of our blessed religion, and without an humble imitation of whose example in these things we can never hope to be a great nation. Grant our supplication, we beseech thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

George Washington's first inaugural prayer

A Suggestion

A suggestion of the Presbyterian Historical Society we may well propose to the members of our Society: "Perhaps you as a member of our Society may help to rescue from obscurity significant papers of prominent Presbyterians. If you know of the existence of letters, journals, diaries, and other documents, we shall appreciate your writing us about them. Why not try your skill as an amateur detective? A tip in time may save valuable records for the benefit of future generations. You could start by locating the records of your own church."

From the *Presbyterian Key* published by the Presbyterian Historical Society whose motto is "only the key of yesterday unlocks tomorrow."

Looking Ahead

Reformation Sunday, October 26, is being observed more and more in our churches. Pastors planning such a service with an historical sermon will secure fine help from the 150th Anniversary Bulletin of Andover Newton Theological School, 210 Herrick Road, Newton Centre 59, Mass.

Forefathers' Day, November 23, the Sunday preceding Thanksgiving Day, should be observed by every church. Now is the time to be looking ahead and securing material for use. The office of the Society will be glad to furnish helpful material.

Historical pageants are being developed by many churches. These afford an educational opportunity of high value but such a feature should be prepared in plenty of time. The Society has a fine collection of such pageants available on loan by request. The pageants which may begin at Plymouth Settlement should emphasize local beginnings also and picture the development of the church. The preliminary task is to hunt up the old records and develop a group of younger or older persons as participants. These persons will share an experience of lasting value not only for themselves but for the church and community as well.

Film strips are available — especially *The Pilgrims* (22 min.) and *We Came This Way* (15 min.). Information from Missions Council, 287 Fourth Ave., New York 10, N. Y.

Light on a Dark Subject

Columnist Walter Lippmann has sounded recently a characteristically lucid call to the people of the United States to reaffirm those "positive principles and precepts which a good citizen cannot deny or ignore." It was upon such "positive principles and precepts," Mr. Lippmann declares, that our forefathers built the structure that has held our national life together through stress and strain.

The unhappy situation today, as the Washington correspondent of the *New York Times* James Reston, has said is that "we are engaged in this ideological contest without being able to define our own ideology." We need desperately to take new hold upon our own philosophy of life for, if we do not, how are we to stand our ground against so powerful an alliance of anti-democratic dogmas?

From Dr. McCracken's Editorial, *Advances* February 14.

Early Standards of Congregationalism

We object alone to be ruled by priests, bishops and such except those we ourselves choose!

HENRY JACOB

Henry Jacob was one of the earliest English Congregationalists and is given credit for first using the name "Congregational" as applied to a local church.

Letters We Appreciate

Note: The extracts from three letters (one pastor, two laymen, indicate how our people are appreciating the opportunities afforded by a worthy church anniversary. We are always pleased with such letters and we have available excellent material for gift and loan. F. L. F.

"We are planning a celebration in 1958, the extent of which will depend upon the enthusiasm we can generate in the coming months. The committee has already agreed upon several goals for the centennial year, some spiritual, some material. On the material side, some of our goals are sanctuary, chapel and church school area decorating, an historical booklet, a banquet, a pageant of an historical nature and receptions for visiting ministers. A very comprehensive historical booklet was published on the occasion of our fifty-year celebration, a copy of which is enclosed for your records.

"On the spiritual side, one promising idea is a so-called "Second Century Covenant," to be signed by all members of our church at a special service or services.

"In furtherance of the above plans, we would be very pleased to accept your offer of sample anniversary programs and church histories."

ARNOLD E. ROOD, *Chmn. Centennial Com.*
Burlington, Wis.

"The First Congregational Church of Kansas City, Kansas, will celebrate its 100th Anniversary in 1958. We have the added distinction of being the oldest church in the city. (Continuous operation.) Celebration of such an event seems appropriate. I have been made chairman of a committee to review some of the experiences of other churches in this connection, and then to recommend a program to our congregation.

"Your assistance will be of great value. General comment as well as specific recommendations will be appreciated."

EVAN H. BROWNE, Kansas City, Kans.

"As far as I know, our church has not celebrated its anniversaries within the past thirty or forty years.

"It's our intention to alter that tradition this year with a fitting celebration. At a recent meeting of the congregation it was suggested we write your office for ideas and sample programs successfully devised and used by other churches. We have a few notions of our own, but we would like to gain as much as possible from the experiences reported to your Society. Also, we would appreciate a bibliography or list of resources relating to the Redding Church or the history of our immediate vicinity. Our records are not all that one would hope to have in developing a good celebration."

LORING S. ENSIGN, Redding, Conn.

A Great Book

Dr. Ola Elizabeth Winslow has given to this generation a book which we will neglect at our peril.

"The battle for freedom, by any definition, is never won. Nor will it ever be quite lost. The meaning of freedom changes with the generations, but the fight is perennial and must be. Roger Williams symbolizes, and also personifies, something in the human spirit that perpetually renews the battle." With these words Ola Elizabeth Winslow concludes her "Master Roger Williams" — certainly one of the most inspiring biographies about an American by an American written in recent years. Its publication at this precise moment in our national life is fortuitously timed; and we might well ponder what this man can teach us in the present crisis of human liberty, for his bitterest opponents always admitted that he had "the root of the matter in him." — *New York Times Book Review.*

The First Building in the Town

The other day we received a letter from a dear elderly woman telling us of the anniversary of their church, now 175 years old. She wrote that the records indicate that when the first settlers came to that location the first building they put up after they had built their cabins was a church. After fifty years a new church was built which is still in use.

Now this town procedure is characteristic of many communities and it is worthy of note concerning the way of life of the Fathers. They wanted their communities to be guided by the teachings of the church and their own lives gather support from its being there.

In these days we live all too much in this present and this present does not evidence too strong an attachment to things that endure. It is not anchored to the great and enduring everlasting.

The men and women of those early days lived under pressures as do we of today, but they shaped their lives and established their institutions for individual and community upbringing. They are worthy of veneration. A careful restudy of their history will do us no hurt.

New Publications

We have in prospect the printing of two small pamphlets:

1. The Report of the Commission of Nineteen of the Kansas City Council of 1913 which provided a basis for the organized life of our fellowship.

(2) A booklet giving information relating to our State Conferences, a brief history of the beginning and development and range of present activity.

These two booklets will be welcomed by many pastors and church workers.

The Secretary's Report for 1957

The Society had a busy year with good results. It is becoming clear that we were fortunate in planning our educational program with the local church and its interests at the center. There is where our national fellowship has the sources of its life and influence.

Finances: During 1957 we received from Boards, Conferences, churches and individuals sufficient funds to cover our budget and some left over for our reserve which we are trying to build up to a modest amount for emergencies. Dr. Lightbourne, our treasurer, presents elsewhere a summary of his annual report.

(a) Support of National Agencies:

The American Board, the Board of Home Missions, and the General Council have continued their generous support with no strings attached. These agencies each have official representation on our Board of Governors and the relationship we have with them is mutually helpful.

(b) The Conference Support:

We now have 34 Conferences. There are a few that have not yet joined the Society as contributing members and we will feel much more comfortable when we have at least a token support from all the Conferences. The Conference is our main channel of influence. The national agencies and the local churches look for a lead from the State Conference on

all matters relating to their life and work, and to know that the Conference is officially related to the Society is of great help to the Society.

(c) The number of member churches has increased to 284 and contributing individuals to 286 (new churches 35; new individuals 57). These items indicate a reasonable growth but there are new and interesting tasks waiting to be done and they are important.

In General

(a) We have a widening correspondence with secular organizations and with students, especially postgraduate persons working in this field. Also helpful relationships have been established with our own college and seminary libraries and with historical societies of other denominations and state and other general agencies.

(b) We are having very good response from churches concerning their anniversaries and it is to be regretted that so many of our churches have neglected this matter for so many years. (See page 3 for sample letters of inquiry.)

(c) The fastest growing feature is the enrollment and the assistance of local church historians. We now have 1,050 enrolled and with these people there is a lively correspondence. We plan the development of this feature on our program, issuing helpful information that can be distributed widely to pastors and church officials; also the enlistment of additional local church historians.

FREDERICK L. FAGLEY

Keeping Records

Rev. William Schorman, of Belmond, Iowa, writes his church takes satisfaction in the fact that at the close of the year the Sunday Bulletins and the monthly church papers are well bound into a neat book. Copies are placed in the Church Treasury, the State Conference and with the CCHS. This method of keeping a permanent record is highly commended.

Note: Dr. McCracken wishes more churches would send a short note of their anniversary, giving date, principal speakers, pastor, for the column in *Advance*.

A Request

We wish some short reports (150 words more or less) of exactly what have been the helpful results of your anniversary to the church and to the community for a little book of testimony which we hope to publish for use of churches which are considering whether or not to observe their anniversary.

A Correction

Rev. Arvel M. Steece received his Ph.D. from Harvard and is on the faculty of Northland College and adviser to the campus religious program.

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